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ABSTRACT

The paper describes a cooperative teacher training program operated by California State University at Hayward and the Clausen House service-delivery system (a satellite system of six group homes and an apartment living complex serving adults with mental retardation) in Oakland, California. Sections address rationale for the program, the program model, potential benefits for both adult clients and teacher trainees, evaluation of the program, and future projections. Presented are results of a questionnaire survey showing that teacher educators are beginning to recognize the necessity of training teachers to work with exceptional adults. A sample survey form is included. (SBH)

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PREPARING TEACHERS OF EXCEPTIONAL ADULTS: A NEW PRIORITY FOR TEACHER TRAINING

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PREPARING TEACHERS OF EXCEPTIONAL ADULTS: A NEW PRIORITY FOR TEACHER TRAINING[1]

by

Craig Boyan

and

Phyllis Kaplan, Ph.D.

Increasing attention is being focussed on the education and training of adults with exceptional needs. In 1980, P.L. 94-142 will raise the mandated age for special education to 21, and three states (Michigan, Maryland, and West Virginia) already mandate services to students 23 years of age or older (NASDSE Report, 1977). The recent burgeoning of concepts such as career education and lifelong learning, spurred by legislation such as the Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1973 (P.L. 93-112), and the Amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1976 (P.L. 94-482), known as the Lifelong Learning Act, may indicate that the needs of exceptional adults will need to be addressed with greater resources in the coming years.

Recent court decisions, also, have ordered compensatory education for certain handicapped individuals over the usual school age (see, for example, North Carolina ARC vs. State of North Carolina, North Carolina Civil No. 3050). Many community colleges and adult schools now offer special courses

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[1]Presented at the 57th Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children, Dallas, Texas, April, 1979.

for adults with exceptional needs, and these courses may continue to expand as community-based services and deinstitutionalization gain strength and momentum. A trend is clearly discernible extending special education services to adults.

Teacher preparation programs, however, often concentrate on the needs of exceptional children, and do not address the special methods and problems which may be encountered when dealing with exceptional adults. This may mean that:

1. New teachers who begin work with exceptional adults may have had little or no previous experience with this age group.

2. Teachers of exceptional children, lacking direct experiences with the problems faced by exceptional adults in our society, are hampered in knowing precisely which skills their students will need most after they leave the public schools. Thus, although many skills are being taught efficiently, these skills may not all be relevant to the real problems and challenges the students will face after graduation.

3. Educators in community residential facilities, and college or university teacher educators, are missing unique opportunities for exciting cooperative programs.

This paper will present a detailed description of a cooperative teacher training program operated for the past four years by California State University, Hayward, and the Clausen House service-delivery system, a satellite system of six group homes and an apartment-living complex serving adults with mental retardation in Oakland, California.

In addition, the results of a questionnaire survey recently

sent to selected teacher training institutions in California will be presented, showing that teacher educators are beginning to recognize the necessity of training teachers to work with exceptional adults.

The authors believe that by involving teacher trainees in direct experiences with exceptional adults, future special educators will come to know firsthand the unique problems and opportunities faced by special adults in today's world. As today's special children continue to grow to adulthood, this firsthand knowledge may become increasingly valuable, if not indispensable, to tomorrow's special educators.

Rationale

It has long been recommended that facilities serving persons with special needs maintain close associations with institutions of higher learning. The Standards for Services for Developmentally Disabled Individuals (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals, 1977) discuss such involvement in the areas of training and research, staff exchanges, student field placements, curriculum development, and so forth (Section 7.5.3). PASS 3 (Wolfensberger and Glenn, 1975) also stresses "ties to academia" (Item R131) as a key element in providing excellent services to clients. O'Connor (1976) also sees local community colleges as an excellent source of in-service training for the staff of community residential facilities.

The authors have located little research, however, on the specifics of cooperative teacher education programs between community-based residential facilities, and colleges or universities with teacher training programs. One of the few studies in this area

(Koplik, 1976) discusses the need for more cooperative teacher training programs, especially for teachers of the severely and profoundly retarded, and the need for greater understanding between educators in the residential institutions and those in colleges or universities. She writes:

> There seems to be a need for the development of more cooperative teacher training programs, particularly programs which can be offered at the institutional facility so that teachers of the severly and profoundly retarded may develop the skills and competencies which many workers feel they lack. (p. 349)

In addition, increased use of the community itself as a learning laboratory for teaching a broad array of coping skills, is challenging the traditional roles of teachers. One example of community-based programming at the secondary level produced the following recommendations:

> The working hours of teachers will change, and teachers will be working in community facilities as well as in schools. Needless to say, some of the difficulties resulting from necessary changes in the teaching day and in teaching locations are unsettling to some classroom-oriented teachers and to some extent to teachers in training who are unprepared for community instruction.
> (Certo et al., 1977, p. 124)

Advances in career education methods may also change traditional roles. Teachers may be increasingly called upon to:

> ...become involved in such activities as job procurement, teaching work and community living skills in appropriate settings, and working with non-handicapped individuals who are important in the students' lives, such as job supervisors and other workers.
> (Pomerantz and Marholin, 1977, p. 135)

Finally, with the increased emphasis on precise instructional objectives mandated by P.L. 94-142, it is more important than ever that teachers, even at the preschool and primary levels, have realistic concepts of the problems which are being faced by exceptional adults living in contemporary society. The goals and objectives chosen for the IEP, especially at the secondary level,

must reflect the most important skills needed after the age of 18 or 21. (Cf.Boyan, 1978a). Teachers may be able to select these skills more effectively if they have had firsthand experience with adults with special needs.

For all these reasons, the authors propose the following model as a step toward broadening the scope of teacher training programs, and closing the service gap which often exists between services for exceptional children and services for exceptional adults.

Program Model

California State University in Hayward, and the Clausen House satellite system in Oakland, are located a short drive apart in a major urban area of northern California. The Clausen House system serves eighty adults with developmental special needs, most with mild or moderate mental retardation, in a system of six residential facilities and an apartment-living complex, scattered through a residential area near downtown Oakland. (For a more complete description, see Boyan, 1978b).

During the Spring of 1975, and for three additional Spring Quarters thereafter, the authors have conducted a graduate teacher training class of 20 to 30 students at the several community facilities which make up the satellite system. Meetings of the course, titled "Specialist Competencies II," were held once each week for twelve weeks, and took place for three hours in the early evening. This allowed the teacher trainees, many of whom were involved in other student teaching activities, to come to the facility, and also permitted the class activities to supplement, rather than supplant, the agency's ongoing educational programming,

much of which took place during the day. The following description is not based on any one year of the program's operation. Rather, it is a broad, composite picture based on four years of "trial and success."

The first meeting of the class was an introduction of the student teachers to the clients of the community residential facility, and to various agency procedures. Following a brief introductory presentation, students and an agency staff member engaged in question and answer on areas such as funding, legal rights of adults, types of agency programming, and so forth. This was followed by a tour of some of the system's other facilities, and was also an opportunity for the trainees to meet the clients.

The second week was devoted to organizing a "mini-college" within the overall class structure. Each teacher trainee presented a specific course offering to several agency clients, after discussion with these clients of their interests. These courses included physical activities (swimming, basketball, bowling), leisure time classes (sewing, quilt-making, crocheting), woodworking, role-playing, dance, reading, language, indoor gardening, ethnic cooking, use of multi-level game boards or traditional games to teach coping skills, and so forth. Videotape and photography were media used to supplement these classes. This design was meant to give agency clients latitude to choose activities in which they were interested, and to allow teacher trainees to respond to those needs.

It may be interesting to note that the basic programming

maintained during the regular educational day by the agency also dealt with independent living and coping skills. This did little, however, to dampen the clients' enthusiasm for the evening classes.

On the evening of the class, the teacher trainees would arrive at the agency's main educational facility at about the time the clients were finishing the evening meal. For approximately one hour, they participated in open discussion with their university instructor and the director of the agency's educational program (the authors) on problems or challenges which had arisen the previous week. These question and answer sessions ranged from specifics of agency funding, relationships with parents, laws affecting adults with developmental special needs, and so forth, to specific questions about emotional problems, acting-out behaviors, or successful growth experiences which individual clients were experiencing during the classes.

Following this hour, the trainees dispersed to the various places where their "mini-college" classes were held: in the central educational facility; in the smaller, satellite residential facilities; in the apartment-living complex; or in the community itself. The remaining part of the evening, about two hours, was spent with the clients themselves. Each class, of course, sought to maximize self-help, coping, or leisure time skills, and to increase self-esteem and foster mature behavior among participants. It had, of course, been ascertained well ahead of time that both the university and the agency were committed to the basic principles of normalization.

Occasionally during this period all the students and clients would gather together for social activities. Two entire evenings

were given over to special events, one of which was a trip to a large restaurant in San Francisco, involving such coping skills as taking BART, the new mass transit system, and using local bus lines. This was followed by a special tour of one of the major hotels and a visit to its revolving rooftop. The other event, held on the final evening of the course, was a Special Awards Night, at which each class presented a summary of its achievements, often including a display of materials or crafts which had been created. Each client received a special award recognizing some unique achievement or contribution, and on at least one occasion, the agency's clients presented an award to someone from the university. These Awards Nights were often very moving experiences for all concerned, and brought about feelings of closeness and warmth among the participants.

Potential Benefits

This program held many potential benefits for the various groups involved. First and most obviously, the facility's adult clients received the benefit of many weeks of exciting, relevant programming, culminating in some instances in completed craft projects and, perhaps, in new coping skills.

Second, the teacher trainees were exposed to the difficulties, special problems, and unique challenges posed by adults with special needs living in the midst of the community. As more and more exceptional adults move into community-based programs, the demand for instructors with competencies in teaching adults may increase greatly. A course such as this may help teacher trainees to learn to design more effective instruction for exceptional adults (or children), by knowing what specific coping skills will be needed in adult life. It may also help them to design more

efficient instruction for adult clients, by helping them learn which methods and materials can (or cannot) be adapted for adult populations from techniques designed specifically for children.

The staff of the community agency may also benefit from such a course. The university students may be able to provide a fresh outlook and a new burst of energy, since they are entering what is, for many of them, a novel situation. They may come with abundant ideas, a knowledge of current research, and new teaching methods. In ideal situations, this could lead to creative interchange of new ideas with staff members of the agency. In the classes under discussion, one tangible result of the trainees' visits was an assortment of multi-level game boards, prepared during the course of the class and left permanently with the agency. Thus the potential benefits for the community facility are also great.

It may also be worthwhile to mention that the cost to both service systems of implementing this program was negligible: some extra transportation and food costs, a few more materials, and some extra hours of staff time. The authors feel that a cost-benefit analysis would reveal that this is a superb use of resources.

Evaluation

Informal evaluation procedures indicated that the program was beneficial. The clients looked forward eagerly to each new Spring Quarter, and often asked about the "Hayward State people." Their happiness and excitement on Awards Night and on the evening trip to San Francisco made it evident that they felt the course to be tremendously worthwhile.

Teacher trainees were also asked to comment on the value of

their experience, and their reaction was generally favorable. It is possible, however, that the real value of a teacher training course will not be realized until a teacher has had subsequent experience in the field. In a follow-up study, a small group of trainees was contacted one year after they had originally taken the course. Their comments included "very valuable . . . fantastic . . . anyone working with (a certain disability group) should visit the community facility." One former trainee, now working with preschool children, said that it was good to have an idea of where her students were going. Another teacher said that the course had given her a new kind of contact with more severely handicapped students, and had influenced her career direction. (Currently working with exceptional young adults, she voiced concern over their post-graduation placement.) These comments suggest that, at least for some trainees, the course was in fact a valuable experience.

There were, on the other hand, certain problems which bear discussion. Some of these had to do with the relationships between the teacher trainees and the agency's staff. Perhaps because many of the live-in staff who worked during the evening did not possess advanced academic degrees, and since they often had set schedules for training or other activities established with the clients for the evening hours, the potential existed for viewing a large influx of energetic graduate students as a disruption rather than a help. A problem such as this may be minimized by involving these staff members in discussions and planning about the special evening classes before the arrival of the teacher

trainees. Involving staff in discussion and planning ahead of time, giving them the option of joining in the classes themselves, and stressing the ultimate benefits for the clients, may be successful ways of overcoming these problems.

The other side of this coin is the students' attitude toward agency staff. It is important that they see the staff as colleagues with valuable expertise and intimate knowledge of the needs and strengths of the clients. Although the agency's live-in staff may have less formal education than the students, they may also have more experience with the clients' daily lives, and be charged with the responsibility for implementing the agency's long-range goals and policies for client growth. Again, it is important to discuss these points with the teacher trainees before the class is in full swing, to prevent any aloofness from agency staff from developing.

Since the class called for brief and sometimes intense encounters between the teacher trainees, the agency staff, and the clients, the success of the program ultimately depended on the harmony developed between these groups, especially between the trainees and the staff. Both prior to the class, and especially during the first few sessions, close understanding and cooperation between these groups must be achieved.

Future Projections

Future projections for this class would certainly include "more of the same." An interesting project which could be combined with this class would be as follows. Prior to the first class at the agency, ask teacher trainees to list the ten most important behaviors which exceptional students should have mastered prior

to leaving the public schools. These could be the instructional objectives for an "overall IEP" of the first eighteen years of schooling. Then, just before the last meeting of the class, ask the trainees to re-write these ten objectives, and compare them with the original lists. The experiences gained during the class may have generated a new and more relevant set of educational goals.

A second possible set of activities would involve more visits to the university by staff and/or clients of the agency, to make greater use of teachers' resource rooms, libraries, and other facilities. Visits could also be made to university-affiliated student teaching sites, for agency staff to acquire more experience with exceptional children. Agency clients might even become involved as teacher's aides in such school sites, thus providing an added job-placement component for the combined programs.

Other future projects would be to involve teacher trainees in observation at community-integrated job sites, where agency clients are receiving on-the-job training with non-handicapped peers; and to have one evening class session be devoted to small group discussions with parents of agency clients, to assess their vital role in the lives of their adult offspring. By these activities, a more rounded picture of the clients' lives, strengths, and needs could be obtained.

Finally, the type of teacher training described in this paper could be extended to inservice training as well as preservice training. Although the time spent in the agency in inservice sessions might not be as great, the impact could be the same. One

interesting inservice project would be to request each teacher, after exposure to the agency's adult clients, to focus on a former student of his or her own who may have graduated from the public school system, and to do an in-depth "follow-up" study of that student's current educational needs. The results of these case studies could then be shared with other teachers in subsequent inservice sessions, focussing on the question: how good a job did the public schools do in preparing this student for the realities of his or her adult life? This question may be central to the future development of special education.

Questionnaire Survey

This paper has presented the perspective that future teachers of exceptional children or adults should have direct exposure and training with adult populations. To check this perception with the perception of other professionals in the field, a questionnaire asking three simple questions (Exhibit 1) was sent to twenty-one public and private teacher training institutions in California. Thirteen questionnaires(62%) were returned.

The results of this survey are as follows:

		N	%
1. Does your institution offer a course(s) specifically designed to train teachers to work with exceptional/handicapped adults (persons over 18 years of age)?	Yes	3	23
	No	10	77
2. Does your institution offer this training as part of a broader course in Special Education?	Yes	6	46
	No	7	54
3. Do you perceive this training as a need which your institution or department should address?	Yes	10	77
	No	3	23

Some of the respondents' comments are of interest. One respondent indicated that his institution's preparatory work with adults is primarily for teachers who plan to work, or are working, in community colleges. This supports the concept, presented earlier, that expansion of community-based programs for adults with exceptional needs may soon produce a growing demand for this level of teacher training. Another respondent suggested that there is scope for this type of training in other areas, such as counseling, school psychology, and so forth. Two respondents indicated that their institutions do not yet offer training in special education.

These results clearly indicate that:

1. An overwhelming majority of this sample of educators (77%)

felt that it is important to train teachers to work with exceptional adults.

2. In spite of this fact, less than one fourth (23%) of the institutions sampled offer a course designed to do this, while less than half (46%) incorporate such training into other coursework.

These results, although with a small sample, lend support to the idea that this area is indeed a timely priority for teacher educators to address.

Conclusions

The authors have presented their experiences in teaching a cooperative teacher training class for the past four years at a community residential facility for adults with developmental special needs. These experiences lead them to suggest that teacher training institutions should offer coursework specifically designed to train teachers to work with exceptional adults. For trainees planning to work only with children, this could be part of a broader, more generic course in special education. For those planning to work with adults, it could be an optional full course(s), designed to supply the competencies they will need on the job.

The results of a questionnaire survey in California show that teacher educators are already addressing these priorities, and indicate support for the above recommendations.

Exceptional children grow up. Often, their exceptionality stays with them. The current generation of exceptional children has "pioneered" a tremendous expansion of special education

services in the public schools of our nation. These students are now graduating, and services for adults will have to grow with them. Special educators cannot entirely relegate this responsibility to other professional groups, because special educators have the competencies to fulfill many of these new needs. If teacher education is to be a part of this growth, and more important if it is to be a leader of this growth, it must systematically begin to train a new generation of special educators to deal with the unique challenges of serving adults with exceptional needs.

Exhibit 1

TEACHER PREPARATION SURVEY

FOR EXCEPTIONAL ADULTS

1. Does your institution offer a course(s) specifically designed to train teachers to work with exceptional/handicapped adults (persons over 18 years of age)? ___yes ___no

2. Does your institution offer this training as part of a broader course in Special Education? ___yes ___no

3. Do you perceive this training as a need which your institution or department should address? ___yes ___no

COMMENTS: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

OPTIONAL

Name: _____

Title: _____

Institution: _____

Thank you very much.

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